



VINC News

***** WINTER 2008 EDITION *****

Victorian Indigenous Nurseries Co-Operative Newsletter
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Winter: Make the Most of Clear Days

Did you have an Autumn clean out of your garden? If not, you can rug up and get out in the garden on fine winter days and review it. Take a note of which parts are in shade as plants that are meant to grow in full sun don't like being in a shady part of the garden for long. It can lead to the plant not thriving and then succumbing to pests or diseases.

There is a fauna theme for this newsletter. A VINC member has written an article and there is a competition for friends groups and schools for the best tree hollow. Come in and buy some plants so that you can attract birds to your backyard.

Banksia marginata

(by Jan Chamberlain, Photo: Jude Larkin)

Banksia marginata (Silver Banksia) bears pale to bright yellow flowers (40 to 100 mm long) from



September to April. It grows reasonably quickly and will grow in full sun or partial shade and makes a marvellous screen in the

garden. It can be pruned when actively growing. Cut the flowers and bring them inside or give them to a friend. It will probably only grow to about 5 metres and is about half as wide as it is tall. New growth is usually brown and furry. Plant it in a raised area as it does like good drainage. You could grow it in a pot as a bonsai specimen (but that is like having a pet - it needs lots of attention).

Attracting Indigenous Birds to Your Garden

(by Neal Masters)

Any suburban garden, no matter how large or small, can become a haven for a range of our

beautiful indigenous birds. As I write this article an eastern spinebill hovers alongside a *Correa glabra* just metres away from my lounge room window, sipping nectar from deep inside the tubular lime green flowers. A pair of brown thornbills splash excitedly in a shallow terracotta bird-bath throwing tiny droplets of water high into the air.

My small garden in Fairfield is a concrete driveway and is no larger than 4.5m x 4.5m in size yet it is visited by an enormous range of indigenous birds. I use a number of simple methods to attract indigenous birds into my garden and these can be used to entice indigenous birds into any garden.

Indigenous birds eat a wide range of foods including nectar, insects, seeds and fruit. Therefore, the best way to attract a wide range of birds into your garden is to ensure that it contains a selection of plants that supply them with all of these foods.

Our small local honeyeaters such as the Eastern Spinebill, New Holland Honeyeater and White-



plumed Honeyeater adore plants such as *Correa glabra*, *Banksia marginata*, *Callistemon sieberi*, *Eucalyptus* spp. and *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* (pictured - photo: Beth Kimber).

The flowers and leaves of plants such as *Bursaria spinosa*, *Kunzea ericoides*, *Goodenia ovata*, *Myoporum viscosum*, *Acacia* spp. and *Eucalyptus* spp. will attract a host of insects

providing a banquet for birds such as the Superb Fairy Wren, White-browed Scrub Wren, Brown Thornbill, Grey Fantail, Scarlet Robin and Rufous Fantail.

A raised bird-bath provides a focal point for birds in the garden. A supply of fresh water becomes more important during the summer months but many birds will visit throughout the year for a bath or a drink. Birds of all shapes and sizes prefer shallow water no deeper than about 30mm. You only have to watch them revel in the shallow puddles left on paths and roads following a downpour to see the joy that an area of shallow water brings to birds.

Bird-baths made from materials with a rough finish such as terracotta or concrete are far better for birds than those that are glazed or are made from glass and have shiny, slippery edges. Small birds have been known to drown in deeper, more slippery bird-baths. It is best to site your bird-bath in a shady, open position (so that cats aren't provided with cover for stalking) but not too far from either dense shrubs or trees which provide a place of refuge in the event of an attack.

(continued in Spring newsletter)

Tree Hollows

(by Judy Allen, Photos: Beth Kimber)

Competition for hollows is strong out there, particularly in urban areas. Hollows in trees are often damage related, and are formed as a result of wind breaks, lightning strike or insect attack. Some trees lose their lower branches (self prune) and hollows can form at this point. Fungi will enter and insects and other animals will scratch and dig their way into the dead wood in



the middle of the tree, to start the renovation process. Hollows take a long time to form. A small hollow for an eastern pygmy-possum

takes about 100 years to form.

A medium sized hollow big enough for a parrot may take 150 years to develop. So how long does it take to form a hollow for a powerful owl?

Hollows are good for:

- Housing and breeding
- Protection from predators
- Birds that eat beetles
- Water storage, so possums don't have to get down on the ground

Little animals often like small hollows to deter predators getting in. Pregnant micro bats look for small cavities, opening into a large interior to create a maternity colony for their young.

The vulnerability of some species may not be immediately noticed.

The Yellow tailed Black Cockatoo lives for many, many years, but is capable of breeding for only part of its lifespan. If it doesn't have access to large tree hollows those breeding years are lost. And the population crash won't be seen until years later.

What animals use hollows?

Bats, possums, gliders, cockatoos, galahs, owls, parrots, ducks, rosellas, lorikeets, kookaburras, kingfishers, falcons, frogs, skinks, beetles, antechinus

For many species the availability of hollow bearing trees in the landscape is a key limiting factor to their on-going survival.

Some local trees that form hollows are:

River Red Gum, Yellow Gum, Grey Box and Manna Gum.



How can you help protect our habitat trees?

- ☀ Advocate for their protection
- ☀ Report hollow takeovers by European bees to your local Council or Park representative
- ☀ Improve the root zone around the hollow bearing tree
- ☀ Plant a wildlife corridor to the tree

References and further information:

Gibbons, P & Lindenmayer, D (2002), Tree Hollows and Wildlife Conservation in Australia, CSIRO.

http://www2.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/PDFs/landholder_notes_01_TreeHollows.pdf

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/nature/Factsheet5TreeHollows.pdf>

Schools and Friends Groups Win a Voucher

VINC is giving away 10 vouchers of 20 plants to support 'Trees with Hollows' to local Friends groups and schools. Simply provide a photo of your tree (or email it in) and a statement of less than 200 words about the proposed work that will be done to support your hollow bearing tree signed by your Principal or Friends group leader. Send your entries to: VINC Trees with Hollows' Competition

Activities

Planting Day: Westfields Grassland (opp Parks Vic office in Yarra Bend Road) on Sat 12 July 10am, followed by a BBQ at VINC. All VINC members welcome.

Friends of VINC Wetlands have scheduled the following events for the rest of the year:

Dates	Activities
Sat 19 July	Plant maintenance – other activities TBA
Sat 20 Sept	Plant maintenance – other activities TBA
Sat 15 Nov	End of year BBQ with guest speaker "Birds of the Yarra Park Bend. Some weeding if we feel motivated!

Plant Name Changes

Ooops - an error crept into the last newsletter. *Dianella longifolia* is now *Dianella laevis* (Pale Flax Lily) - not the other way round!

VINC Personalities

Mark Hursch (the Manager)

I completed my Advanced Certificate of Horticulture. at NMIT in the late 1990's whilst working full time in the retail industry as a small business proprietor.



In 1997, I made the switch to horticulture, combining my retail experience with love of plants, working as an Assistant Manager at a

retail nursery for two years. I moved into a role at a large indigenous plant nursery in the west for twelve months before starting at VINC as Manager in January 2001.

I am responsible for the management of the day to day operations and programs of the nursery.

Loves: Bike riding (I'm a recent convert), swimming, collecting vintage alarm clocks, listening to community radio and the ABC, music, and exploring what's left of the local flora near where I live.

Dislikes: Our appalling public transport network (especially trains), commercials (especially the ones that treat you like an imbecile), mindless consumerism, apathy, nursery weeds.

Renowned for: Making ridiculous and undecipherable statements, usually late in the day after not drinking enough water.

Passionate about: My family, environmental and social sustainability, music. Being able to make a positive environmental contribution, both privately and in the workplace.

Currently: Undertaking research on Westclox (Clocks) Australia which I'm hoping will morph into a book one day.

Staff Update

Mark Hursch, Jude Larkin, Beth Kimber, Carol Smyth and Jan Chamberlain completed a Sustainable Gardening Australia course in June. Our SGA certification requires staff to attend the training course. Subscribe to their free email newsletter for gardening advice:

www.sgaonline.org.au/subscribecuttings.html

Welcome back to weekend retail staff member Jo Clark.

VINC Vollie Fast Five

(by Elspeth Brock)

Rachel Stratford is a regular Friday volunteer, helping with the propagation at VINC and is also well known for her excellent scones!

Q1. How long have you been involved with VINC?

A1. Quite a few years now...

Q2. Do you have a memorable volunteer moment?

A2. Every week is memorable but one particular event was quite amazing.

When we were repotting we found some skink eggs and as I held one in my hand it hatched!

Q3. What excites you about indigenous plants?

A3. Their resilience and their flowers (which Judy points out that I need my glasses to see!).

Q4. What is one of your favorite indigenous plants? What do you like about it?

A4. Too many favourites...Banksias, Eucs, Chocolate Lilies, Correas and all the rest.

Q5. What do you think is the greatest environmental challenge Australia is presently facing?

A5. The effect of Climate Change is really quite scary with the lack of rain and the impact this is having on our environment - this makes the work done at VINC so much more relevant.